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ABSTRACT

Research and evaluation activities have gradually evolved from the selection of an improvement and evaluation model, as well as data collection using an attitudinal survey and application of case study procedures along with focus group interviews, to the preparation of summary documents and specific policy recommendations. This document presents models of evaluation, assessment, and profiling that have emerged from the activities and findings of the Career Ladders Research and Evaluation Project. The project, in its 5th year of indepth study of 15 pilot-test school districts, has produced extensive data on specific interrelated components within school systems. The three resultant assessment models and profiling procedures can be applied to any school system (or organization) that has identified the essential interrelated components for reaching functional goals. The models--"Interrelated Components of Program Support and Focus for Effecting Change and Reform in Education," "Assessment Model for Projected District Readiness Levels," and "District Readiness Profile of Strengths and Weaknessess"--provide for individual diversities of readiness levels and allow sufficient time for change within unique systems. (7 references) (KM)

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EVALUATING & PROFILING SCHOOLS BASED ON A MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS:

Professors and Practioners Colaborating on a Reform Movement to Improve Student Achievement

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EVALUATING & PROFILING SCHOOLS BASED ON A MODEL OF ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: Professors & Practioners Collaborating on a Reform Movement to Improve Student Achievement

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Purpose

The purpose of this report is to present models of evaluation, assessment and profiling which have emerged from the activities and findings of the Career Ladders Research and Evaluation Project. The evaluation project is in its fifth year of in-depth study of 15 pilot-test school district organizations. It has produced extensive information about specific interrelated components within school systems which must be operating on an adequate level in order for change or reform to be effective.

After summarizing the "research activity" involved in the formulation of the models, the researchers will review the following three key areas for program evaluation and improvement: (1) assessing organizational readiness levels for program implementation; (2) need for adjusting "time and planning for change" to individual districts' operational levels; and (3) establishing valid relationships between levels of teacher performance and student achievement.

Research Activity

Research and evaluation activities have gradually evolved from selection of an improvement and evaluation model, as well as data collection using the Perception Assessment Scale attitudinal survey (Packard, R., et. al., 1986, March) and application of case-study procedures along with focus-group interviews (Packard & Dereshiwsky, 1989), to the preparation of summary documents and specific policy recommendations. Figure 1, p. 6, depicts documentation procedures of data analysis, reduction and reporting of related policy recommendations to the state legislature. A selected list of some of the research findings and summative reports may be found in the "reference" section of this paper.

The resultant assessment models and profiling procedures can be applied to any school system, or for that matter, any other organization which has similarly identified the essential interrelated components for reaching functional goals. These models are depicted on pp. 7 through 10, as follows: (1) Figure 2. Interrelated Components of Program Support and Focus for Effecting Change and Reform in Education; (2) Figure 3. Assessment Model for Projected District Readiness Levels; (3) Figures 4 and 5. District Readiness Profile of Strengths and Weaknesses.

District System Readiness Levels for Program Implementation

Districts are extremely diverse in their ability to profit from the career ladder teacher-incentive intervention program. The discovery of individual districts' lack of readiness to support a major reform program, despite the existence of carefully formulated "uniform" legislative guidelines, has resulted in the development of an integrated model of support and focus factors which are essential for successful change efforts (See Figure 2, p. 7). Each identifiable component within a system, which represents an organization's functional operations for meeting its specific goals, is important to consider when initiating maximally effective change or development of any one of its factors. All of the elements are interrelated and must be integrated when considering any essential part of the whole. With respect to successful reform, trying to change or improve one organizational element in isolation has not proven to be effective.

Assessment & Profiling. The application of a variety of methodologic techniques has enabled the researchers to develop individual profiles derived from assessment data. Figure 3, p. 8, shows a model which depicts the interrelated elements within district organizations which require assessment in order to determine the functional level at which each essential factor is operating. Figures 4 and 5 depict a sample profile derived from the assessment, thereby allowing the research evaluators to recommend

placement of districts on alternate levels of a developmental model which recognizes the effects of diverse readiness levels upon planning for improvement and success.

Profiling has revealed that those factors originally assumed to be supportive of the program goals of teacher and student progress have, instead, been detrimental in many instances. For example, in some districts lacking readiness, early evidence suggests that factors such as evaluation systems, organizational climate, and administrator/district leadership and involvement have had a negative impact upon program implementation. Where little improvement is evident, teachers and students should not bear the burden of lack of program success alone. All possible areas of weakness which are "functional anchors" to reaching educational goals should be carefully considered with respect to identifying responsibility and accountability. In the past, there has been a tendency to blame teachers for lack of educational improvement without looking at other possible organizational factors detrimental to success.

Need for Planned Improvement and Adequate Time for Successful Change

The diversity of readiness among districts, as well as differential readiness of essential operational elements within systems, results in the need for individual organizations to move forward at different rates. Also, individual diversities require a greater focus of attention on improvement of local system weaknesses, rather than on unrelated or "generic" inadequacies of other agencies. Explicitly acknowledging individual time and readiness needs is necessary in order to allow for integrated and successful change.

The change process itself is a very important concept to integrate into any reform program. The reasons for success or failure of past educational reform efforts have been carefully studied, in order to determine the implications for effective integration of the career ladder concepts within each participating district. There needs to be ongoing monitoring of corresponding district indicators of operational effectiveness, such as an

adequately developed curriculum, optimal evaluation systems, and efficient and accurate communications.

The Relation Between Teacher Performance and Student Achievement

A major area of research focus has been the connection between teacher performance and student achievement. Most of the pilot-test districts have not reached the highest level of their potential for objectively demonstrating the connection between teacher performance evaluation and student learning. In fact, the philosophical and technical diversity of districts is probably most evident in this particular area of the study. For example, some districts continue to emphasize purely mechanical evaluation of teachers' methodology in the classroom rather than a thorough and careful identification of student outcomes resulting from teacher input variables. This practice erroneously continues to support the credibility of the assumption that teacher classroom activities accurately account for and/or predict student achievement. In order to be truly successful, a district must be able to validate its evaluation system based on actual gains in student achievement and not just on observational rating systems of classroom communication and activities. Some districts are beginning to make headway toward applying valid and reliable procedures of curriculum application as related to tangible improvement in student outcomes.

A recent finding in one of the pilot districts reveals that teachers should be evaluated based upon their actual performance levels, rather than solely on years of experience and accumulated college credits, as has been somewhat naively assumed and applied in the past. This study is comprehensive, in that it used three simultaneous measures of student achievement: ITBS reading, language and mathematics scores. Furthermore, it assessed the separate and interactive effects upon these measures of such potentially influential factors as teacher experience, education and grade level taught.

Districts need to apply the latest quantitative techniques in order to develop their own valid and reliable measures of teacher and student performance. Several incentives within

career ladder programs are showing genuine promise in motivating teachers to develop skills and assume leadership positions related to improvement of instructional programs.

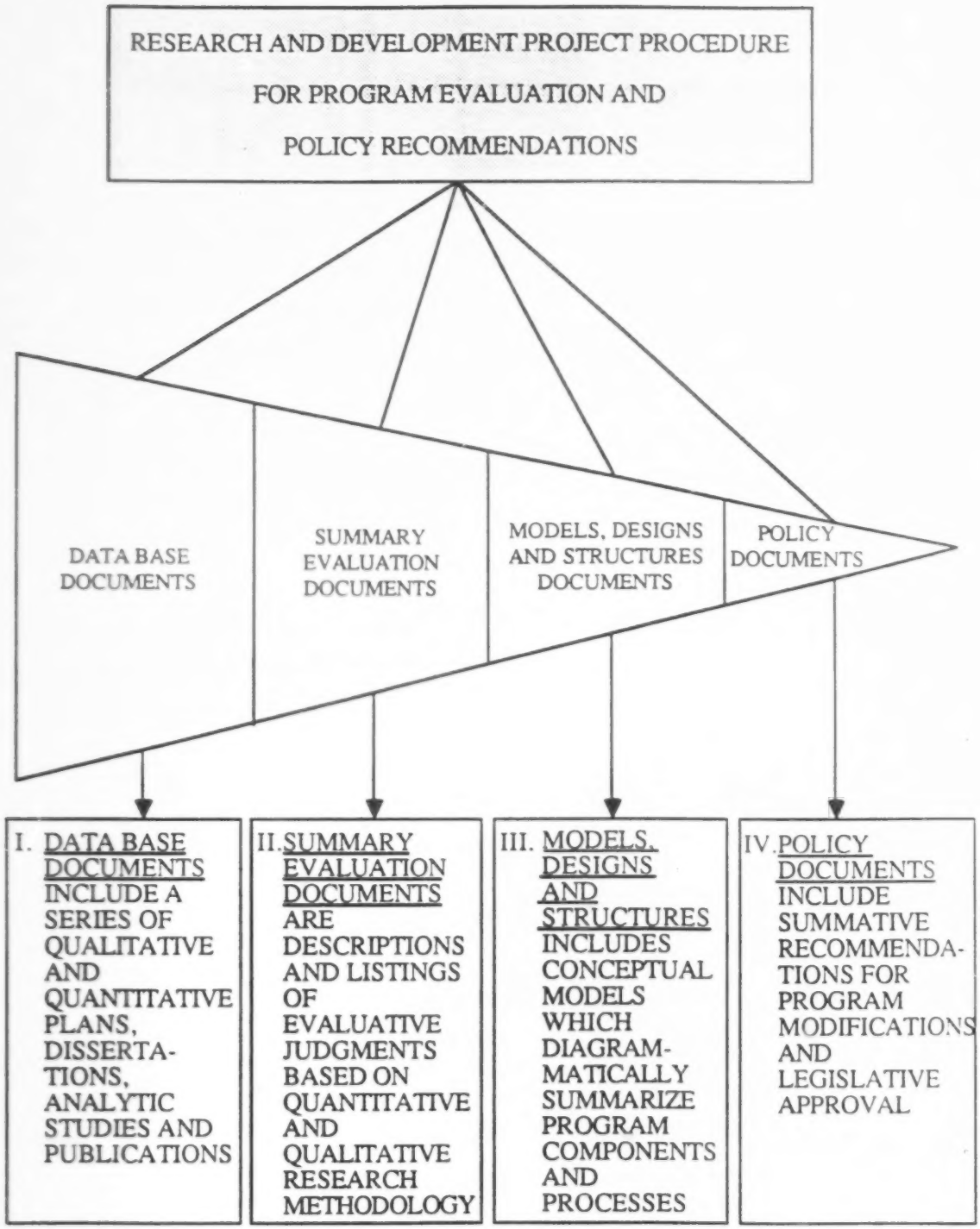
Need for Program Continuation and Refinement

Directions for future research include application of the proposed model of interrelated components of program support and focus factors for effective school reform, in order to enable participating districts to monitor the current operating status of these factors with respect to program implementation. The opinions of government, business/industry and educational policy leaders are also being studied, in order to continue to involve outside agencies in the activities of the project and to apply the findings of policy research to decisions concerning the future status of the career ladder program within the state. Program results have also been studied within the framework of the effective schools movement, along with related implications for effects upon teacher improvement, administrative leadership, and improved accountability for student achievement.

Conclusion

In order for reform movements to be truly successful, essential elements within organizations must be identified, assessed and profiled in order to apply appropriate intervention processes which effect change and improvement with respect to identified areas of weakness. This developmental model allows for individual diversities of readiness levels and sufficient time required for change within unique systems.

Figure 1

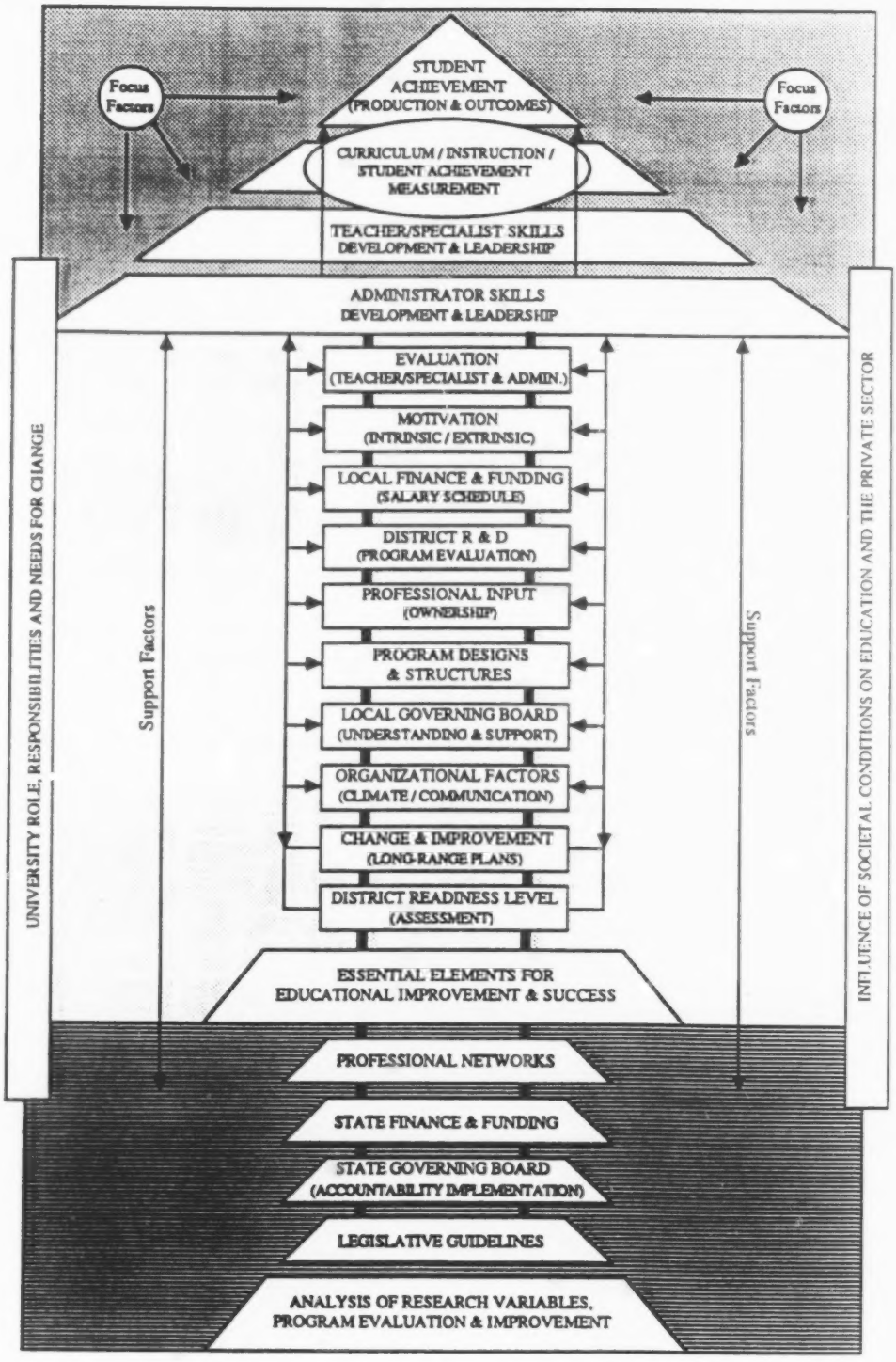

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT PROCEDURE
FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION AND
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS
DATA BASE DOCUMENTS
SUMMARY EVALUATION DOCUMENTS
MODELS, DESIGNS AND STRUCTURES DOCUMENTS
POLICY DOCUMENTS
I. DATA BASE DOCUMENTS INCLUDE A SERIES OF QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE PLANS, DISSERTATIONS, ANALYTIC STUDIES AND PUBLICATIONS
II. SUMMARY EVALUATION DOCUMENTS ARE DESCRIPTIONS AND LISTINGS OF EVALUATIVE JUDGMENTS BASED ON QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
III. MODELS, DESIGNS AND STRUCTURES INCLUDES CONCEPTUAL MODELS WHICH DIAGRAMMATICALLY SUMMARIZE PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND PROCESSES
IV. POLICY DOCUMENTS INCLUDE SUMMATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS AND LEGISLATIVE APPROVAL

Model Depicting Documentation Procedures of Data Analysis, Reduction and Reporting for Policy Recommendations

Figure 2

MAPPING THE DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS
FOR EFFECTIVE SCHOOL REFORM:

Designs and Structures


Focus Factors
STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT (PRODUCTION & OUTCOMES)
Focus Factors
CURRICULUM / INSTRUCTION / STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT MEASUREMENT
TEACHER/SPECIALIST SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP
ADMINISTRATOR SKILLS DEVELOPMENT & LEADERSHIP
UNIVERSITY ROLE, RESPONSIBILITIES AND NEEDS FOR CHANGE
Support Factors
EVALUATION (TEACHER/SPECIALIST & ADMIN.)
MOTIVATION (INTRINSIC / EXTRINSIC)
LOCAL FINANCE & FUNDING (SALARY SCHEDULE)
DISTRICT R & D (PROGRAM EVALUATION)
PROFESSIONAL INPUT (OWNERSHIP)
PROGRAM DESIGNS & STRUCTURES
LOCAL GOVERNING BOARD (UNDERSTANDING & SUPPORT)
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS (CLIMATE / COMMUNICATION)
CHANGE & IMPROVEMENT (LONG-RANGE PLANS)
DISTRICT READINESS LEVEL (ASSESSMENT)
ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT & SUCCESS
Support Factors
INFLUENCE OF SOCIETAL CONDITIONS ON EDUCATION AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR
PROFESSIONAL NETWORKS
STATE FINANCE & FUNDING
STATE GOVERNING BOARD (ACCOUNTABILITY IMPLEMENTATION)
LEGISLATIVE GUIDELINES
ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH VARIABLES, PROGRAM EVALUATION & IMPROVEMENT

A Model of Interrelated Components of Program Support and Focus for Effecting Change and Reform in Education

Figure 3

Assessment Model for Projected
District Readiness Levels

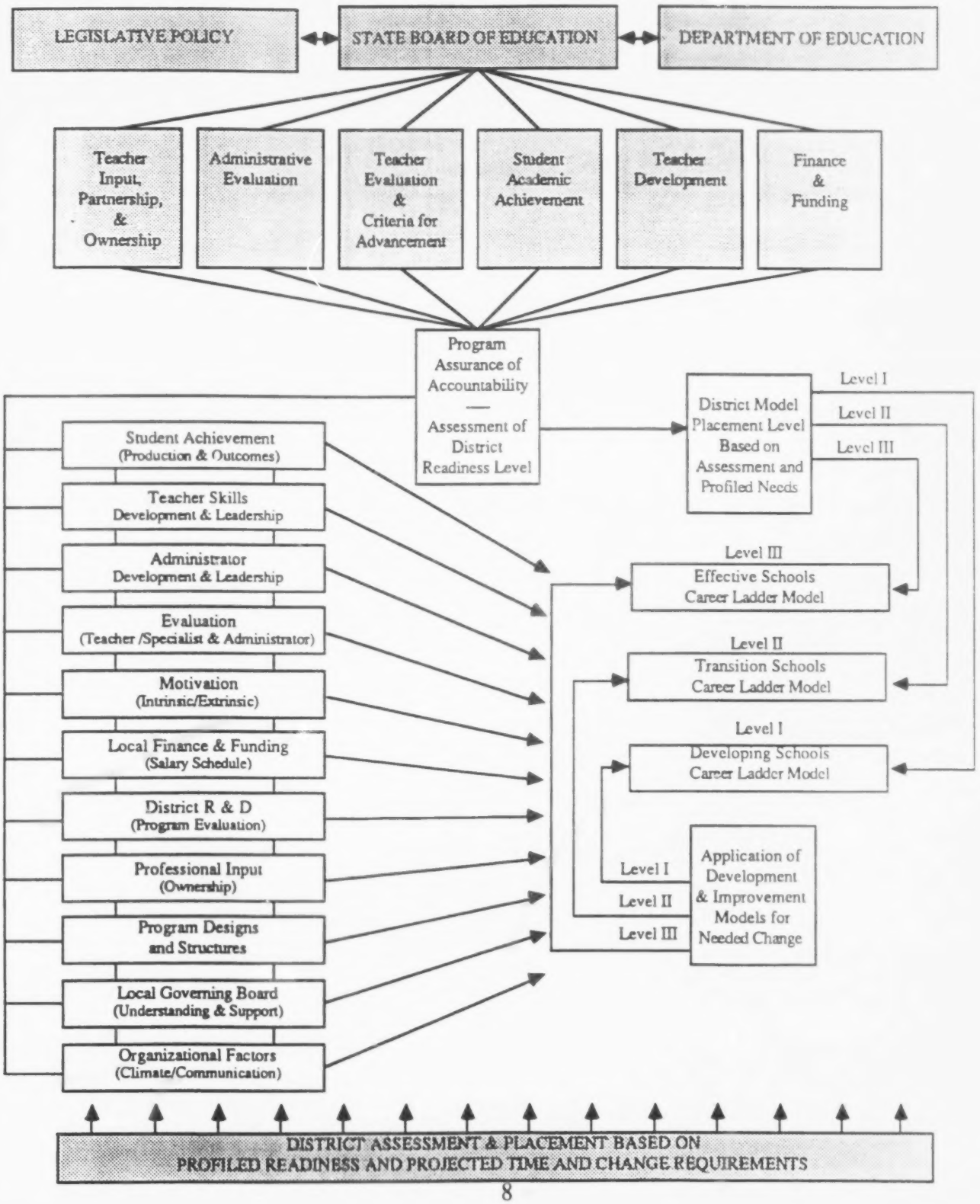

LEGISLATIVE POLICY
STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Teacher Input, Partnership, & Ownership
Administrative Evaluation
Teacher Evaluation & Criteria for Advancement
Student Academic Achievement
Teacher Development
Finance & Funding
Program Assurance of Accountability — Assessment of District Readiness Level
District Model Placement Level Based on Assessment and Profiled Needs
Level I
Level II
Level III
Student Achievement (Production & Outcomes)
Teacher Skills Development & Leadership
Administrator Development & Leadership
Evaluation (Teacher /Specialist & Administrator)
Motivation (Intrinsic/Extrinsic)
Local Finance & Funding (Salary Schedule)
District R & D (Program Evaluation)
Professional Input (Ownership)
Program Designs and Structures
Local Governing Board (Understanding & Support)
Organizational Factors (Climate/Communication)
Level III
Effective Schools Career Ladder Model
Level II
Transition Schools Career Ladder Model
Level I
Developing Schools Career Ladder Model
Level I
Level II
Level III
Application of Development & Improvement Models for Needed Change
DISTRICT ASSESSMENT & PLACEMENT BASED ON
PROFILED READINESS AND PROJECTED TIME AND CHANGE REQUIREMENTS

Figure 4

DISTRICT READINESS PROFILE OF STRENTHS AND WEAKNESSES

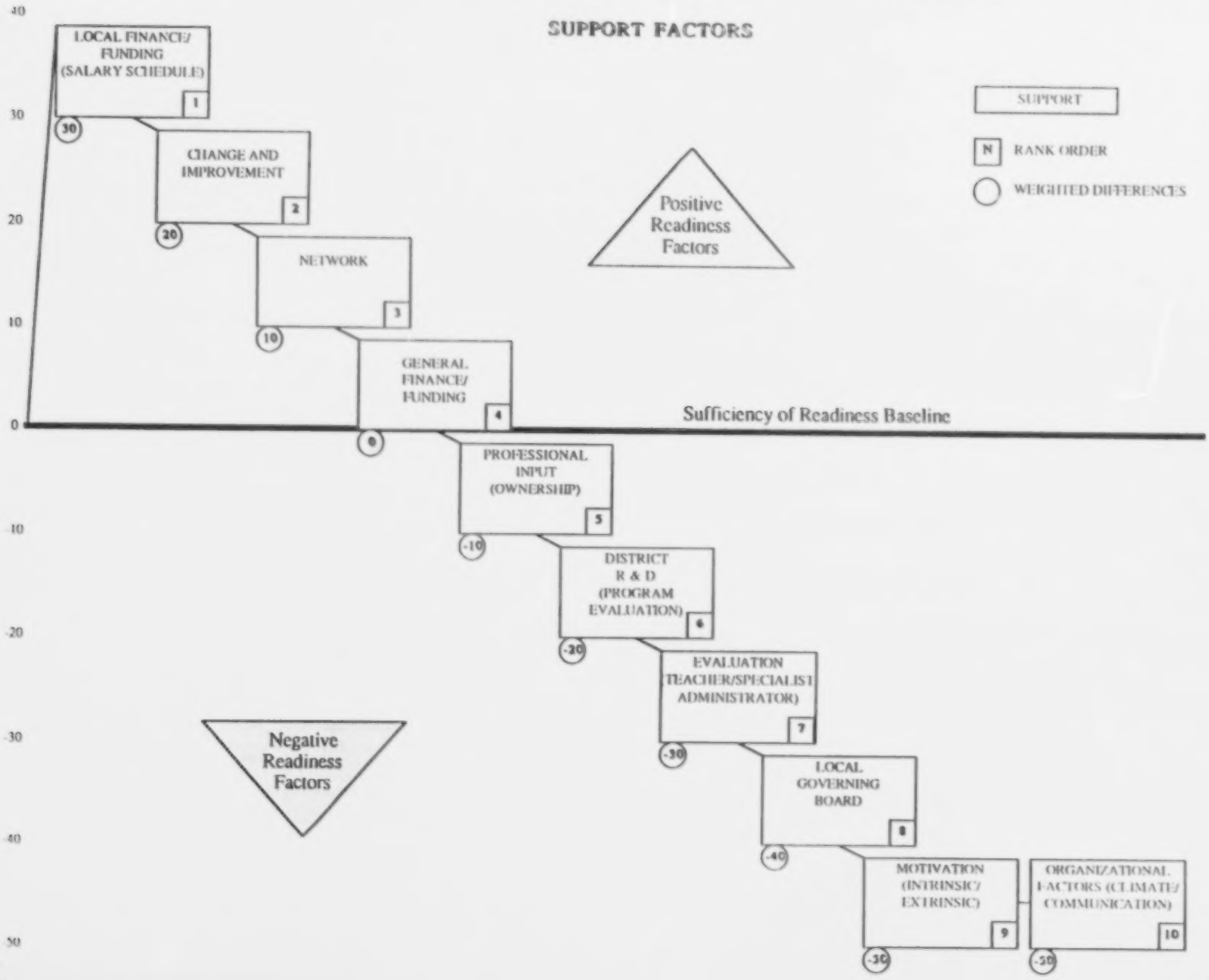
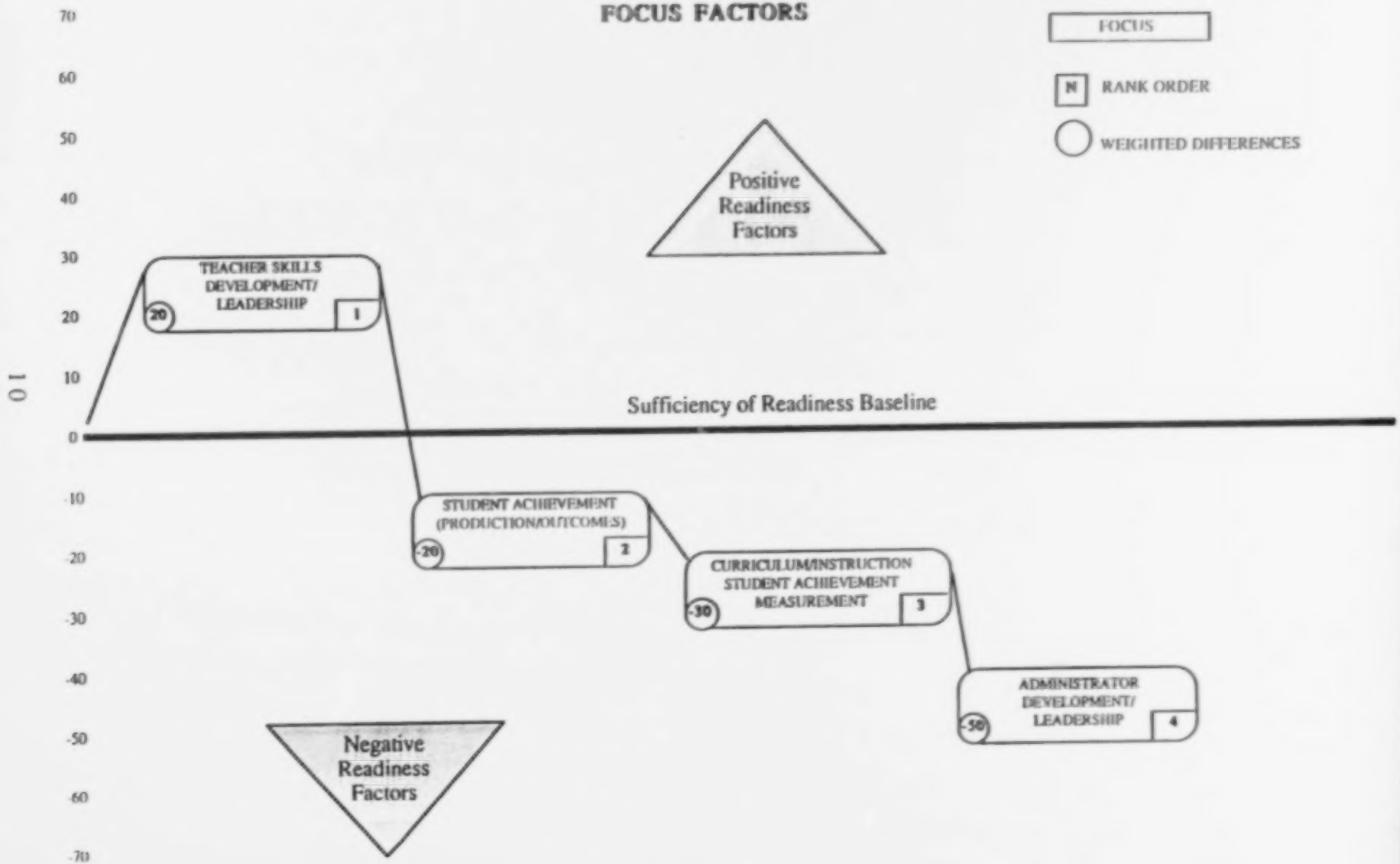


Figure 5

DISTRICT READINESS PROFILE OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES



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